Year 1
Direct Support Professional Training

Resource Guide

Internet Version

Session #7
Teaching Strategies:
Relationships, Task Analysis and Prompts

Department of Education
and the
Regional Occupational Centers and Programs
in partnership with the
Department of Developmental Services
1999

List of Class Sessions

Session	Topic	Time
1	Introduction, Overview of Developmental Disabilities, Values, Diversity	2 hours
2	Communication	3 hours
3	Wellness: Nutrition, Exercise and Safety	3 hours
4	Wellness: Medications	3 hours
5	Wellness: Responding to Individual Needs	3 hours
6	Positive Behavior Support	3 hours
7	**Teaching Strategies: Relationships, Task Analysis and Prompts**	**3 hours**
8	Teaching Strategies: Postive Feedback and Natural Times to Teach	3 hours
9	Daily Living	3 hours
10	Individual Rights, Laws and Regulations	3 hours
11	Leisure and Recreation	3 hours
12	Competency Test	3 hours
	Total Class Sessions	**12**
	Total Class Time	**35 hours**

Key Words

In this session, the key words are:

- Learning Goals

- Task Analysis

- Teachable Steps

- Prompts

- Modeling

- Documenting Progress

Your In-Class Review Notes

This is a place for you to take notes on the review questions during this session.

1. **The very first thing a DSP must do before attempting to teach anything to anyone is to develop a good relationship with the learner. Describe some of the things DSPs can do to build a good relationship with individuals whom they support.**

2. **What are two important reasons for using a task analysis when teaching a new skill?**

3. **Give an example of the following types of prompts:**

   Verbal

   Gestural

   Physical

4. **Describe how you might use a least-to-most assistive prompting strategy to teach an individual to turn on the light when he enters the room (consider turning on the light a one-step task analysis).**

Information Brief

Getting Ready for Session #7

Preparation

Before you attend Session 7, please remember to:

1. Read all of the information for Session #7 in this *Resource Guide*.

2. After reading the information and before Session 7, **answer the questions that you will find on page 9**. You may need your supervisor's help in completing the activity.

Introduction to Teaching Strategies

Teaching useful skills is one of the most important types of support offered by human service agencies to people with disabilities. Support staff must have the ability to teach a wide variety of skills if people with disabilities are to be as independent as possible. As people learn to do more things for themselves, they have more control over their lives. When people have more control over how they spend their time, they are usually happier. Because teaching new skills is so important, agencies providing support for people with disabilities are required to make treatment plans for each individual for whom they provide support. These plans describe useful skills for each individual to learn.

Staff must become familiar with the service and support plans of each person with whom they work.

Establishing A Relationship With The Learner

Many teaching tools to help individuals with disabilities learn useful skills will be discussed in the next two classes. The first and most important teaching tool is to have a good relationship with the person who is being taught. Without a good relationship, staff will not be very successful teachers. Some of the ways a good relationship with a learner can be developed include:

*   Get to know what the individual likes

*   Interact often doing things the individual likes to do

*   Get to know the individual's dislikes

*   When reasonable, help the individual avoid things he/she dislikes

*   Interact often to become familiar with each other's communication style

Information Brief
Task Analysis

What Is A Task Analysis?

When teaching a new skill, it is important to teach in a consistent way so that individuals can learn skills more quickly. Often, the skills being taught are complex, requiring the individual to learn the many actions involved in completing each skill. Complex skills can be broken down into small steps that an individual can more easily learn to perform. Listing the sequence of actions or steps involved in completing a skill is called a TASK ANALYSIS. The following is an example of a task analysis for drinking from a cup.

1. Grasp handle of cup

2. Lift cup to mouth

3. Drink

4. Set the cup on the table

Using A Task Analysis For Teaching New Skills

Not every skill to be taught needs a task analysis. Teaching an individual when to use a skill that the individual already knows how to do, does not require a task analysis. Another type of teaching objective that does not require a task analysis is when teaching an individual to perform a skill more quickly or for a longer period of

time. During Session 8, ways to help individuals use skills they already know how to do will be discussed. Task analysis is useful when teaching an individual to do something he/she does not already know how to do correctly.

One of the most important reasons for listing the steps of a skill in a task analysis is to define exactly what the individual is learning to do so that the skill can be taught the same way every time. Teaching the individual to do the skill the same way every time helps the person learn the skill more quickly. If everybody who teaches an individual follows the task analysis, the skill will be taught the same way each time no matter who does the teaching.

When creating a task analysis for teaching a skill, it is important for staff to practice the skill themselves by following the task analysis before the task analysis is used to teach the person with disabilities. By practicing the skill, staff can make sure the task analysis is complete and the steps are arranged in a logical order.
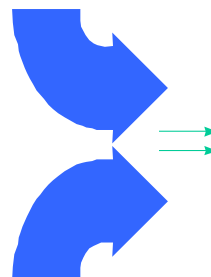
In-Class Activity:
Drawing a Place Setting

On the place mat below, draw a picture of a dinner place setting including a plate, knife, fork, spoon, napkin and cup.

Using the task analysis for table setting the instructor has placed on the overhead, draw a picture of a dinner place setting including a plate, knife, fork, spoon, napkin and cup.

In-Class Activity:
Completing and Ordering Steps in a Task Analysis

Number the steps listed below in the order that the steps should be completed for operating a video cassette recorder (VCR).

_____ Turns on the VCR and TV

_____ Pushes the "PLAY" button on the VCR

_____ Slides video into the VCR in the appropriate place

_____ Holds video with title side toward palm of hand and tape side toward the VCR

_____ Turns channel on TV to Channel 3

In the following task analysis for shaving with an electric razor, several of the steps have been left out. Find at least two steps that have been left out of the task analysis.

1. Picks up electric razor

2. Shaves right side of face

3. Rubs hand over right side of face to check for smoothness

4. Reshaves remaining beard on right side of face

5. Shaves chin

6. Rubs hand over chin to check for smoothness

7. Reshaves remaining beard on chin

8. Shaves neck

9. Rubs hand over neck to check for smoothness

10. Reshaves remaining beard on neck

11. Turns electric shaver off

Homework Activity
(to be completed before Session #7)

Locate the Individual Program Plan and any additional service plans for three people with whom you work. (You may need to ask your supervisor for help with this assignment.) Below, make up fictitious names (to assure confidentiality) for those three people. Beside each name, list some of the skills that each individual may want or need to learn to achieve his/her goals (from the IPP).

Person's first name	**Skills to be learned**
1.	
2.	
3.	

Information Brief

Prompting

Introduction

When an individual with disabilities is learning a new skill, it may be necessary for staff to help the individual with the skill at first. The help a support staff gives an individual to learn a new skill is called prompting. <u>The goal is to support someone in learning something they want to learn, not to force someone to do something they do not want to do.</u>

Different Types of Prompts

There are many different types of prompts staff can use to help an individual complete a new skill. A verbal prompt can be any spoken question, instruction or direction which helps the individual to do any step of the task analysis that he/she cannot do independently. For example when teaching Susan to play a cassette tape, a verbal prompt for the first step of the task analysis might be to say, "Pick up the tape." Verbal prompts can be less directive than actually telling a person what to do. A less directive verbal prompt to pick up the tape might be to ask a question like, "What do you do first?" Verbal prompts should include only as many words as needed to give clear directions because too much talking may confuse the learner. It may also be helpful if staff use the same words as prompts each time the skill is taught.

Another type of prompt to help an individual in completing a skill is a *gestural prompt*. A gestural prompt can be pointing to or touching something and any other body motion by staff which directs the learner's attention toward what should be done next.

Modeling is another way to assist an individual in completing a skill. Modeling involves showing the learner how to do part or all of a skill. Modeling can be helpful to any learner but is probably most helpful with individuals who learn quickly. Individuals with severe to profound mental retardation may not benefit as much from modeling prompts as others with less severe disabilities.

Also, modeling usually is best used at the beginning of teaching. If a learner responds to the modeling with a correct skill response, then the modeling can be repeated with subsequent teaching trials. However, if the first use of modeling does not result in a correct learner response, then it is usually best to stop using modeling as part of the teaching approach. Modeling can be a time consuming teaching strategy, so it is best to make sure it is effective early in the teaching process before using it over and over.

Physical prompts involve physical guidance or touch from staff to help an individual in completing a skill. Physical prompts can range from a brief touch to complete guidance whereby support staff move the learner completely through a given step of the task analysis. Physical guidance can

vary in intensity depending on where on the learner's body the physical assistance is provided. For example, when teaching an individual who has severe movement problems to pick up a leisure material, staff can begin by guiding the learner's arm toward the material. A more helpful physical prompt would be to hold the learner's wrist to guide the hand toward the material. The most assistive physical prompt for helping the learner to pick up a leisure material would be staff placing his/her hand over the learner's hand and guiding the learner's hand to pick up the material.

Suiting Prompts To The Individual Learner

Prompts can vary in strength depending upon how much help the prompt is to the learner. As a general rule, verbal and gestural prompts usually provide only a little help whereas full physical guidance provides the most help. However, which prompts are most or least helpful depends a lot on the learner. For example, if the learner has very good language skills, a slight physical prompt may be less helpful than telling the individual what to do. Some prompts are not useful at all for certain individuals. For example, if an individual has a hearing impairment, verbal prompts will probably not be helpful at all. Similarly, if an individual has visual impairment, gestural prompts are not likely to be helpful. If a person becomes upset when touched or physically guided to do something, physical prompts may not be a good idea for use with that person. The types of prompts used with each learner must be selected with the individual learner in mind. Suiting prompts to the

individual learner will be easier if staff have taken the time to get to know the individual before attempting to teach.

Least-to-Most Assistive Prompting

To help an individual learn a skill as quickly as possible, prompts should be provided following a simple guideline. **Staff should never provide more help than the individual needs to complete any of the steps in the task analysis of the new skill.** When beginning to teach a new skill, staff must find out how much help the learner needs to complete each step of the task analysis. Staff should begin by having the learner try to complete the first step of the task analysis without help. If the learner cannot complete the step correctly without help, staff should provide a mild prompt such as a verbal prompt. If the verbal prompt is not helpful enough so that the learner completes the step correctly, staff should give more help such as with a verbal prompt and a gesture prompt at the same time. If the learner does not complete the step after the verbal and gesture prompt, staff should next provide more help such as with partial physical assistance (guiding the learner through part but not all of the step). If partial physical assistance does not result in the learner completing the step then, staff could then give more help such as by guiding the learner completely through the step. With all prompting, it is very important that staff give the learner enough time to respond to a prompt before providing another more helpful prompt.

Once staff know how much help an individual usually needs to complete each step of the task analysis, then whenever the learner practices the skill, staff should begin by giving less help than the learner usually needs to correctly complete the step. If the first prompt given for the step is not enough help for the learner to correctly complete the step, the staff should give more and more helpful prompts until the learner completes the step correctly. For example, when teaching the learner to drink from a cup, if partial physical assistance is usually needed for the learner to complete Step 1 (grasping the cup), then staff might begin teaching by prompting the step with a verbal or a gestural prompt. If the verbal or gestural prompt does not help the individual enough to complete the step, then a partial physical prompt may be provided. If partial physical guidance does not help enough, staff could provide full physical guidance so that the step is completed correctly before the next step in the task analysis is tried. After Step 1 is completed, staff should prompt Step 2 by giving a little less help than the learner usually needs to complete Step 2 (lifting the cup to the mouth). Increasing amounts of help are given on Step 2 until the learner completes the step correctly. If prompts are provided in this way, the learner should receive the least amount of help necessary for successfully completing any step in the task analysis. In other words, staff never give more help than the learner needs. Using prompts in the way just described is called a "Least-to-Most Assistive Prompting Strategy."

There are several mistakes that staff sometimes make when using least-to-most assistive prompting. One mistake is that staff repeat prompts at the same level for a given step. For example when a staff

person tells a learner to "grasp the cup" (verbal prompt), if the prompt is unsuccessful in helping the person to complete the step, the next prompt for the step should be more helpful such as telling the learner to "grasp the cup" while pointing to the cup (verbal and gestural prompt). New staff may repeat the verbal prompt several times ("Grasp the cup.", "Come on, you can grasp the cup.", "Pick up the cup, ok?", etc.) Repeating the same type of prompt for a given step is not a good idea. It only makes the teaching session longer and can confuse the learner. If the learner does not correctly complete the step when given one prompt, then either the learner does not understand the prompt or is not motivated to complete the step. Repeating the prompt does not help with either situation. Rather, a second prompt on any step in the task analysis should always be more helpful than the first. Similarly, if a third prompt is needed, it should be more helpful than the second prompt.

Another prompting mistake is using full physical guidance as the first prompt on any step of the task analysis. If full physical guidance is given as the first prompt for a step, the individual being taught has no chance to learn.

A third mistake occurs when staff do any step of the task analysis for the learner instead of helping the learner do the step for him/herself. Staff should provide as much help as is needed for the learner to complete any step, but staff should not complete any step without involving the learner.

Information Brief

Documenting the Learner's Progress

The result of good teaching is that an individual makes progress toward learning new skills. One way to check for progress is by comparing how much of a skill the individual has learned from week to week or month to month. One way of checking for progress will be discussed in our next session. For each skill identified as important to learn in the individual's treatment plan, a progress record form similar to the one included in this packet can be prepared. On the progress recording form, the learner's name and the steps of the task analysis should be listed. At least once each week, when the skill is taught (the skill should be taught many times each week but on only one of the teaching sessions is progress recording usually necessary), staff should record a "+" beside each step that is completed independently (without prompting) and an "0" beside each step that requires any prompt by staff. When the progress record shows that all steps are being completed independently, then staff can see that the skill has been learned. When the skill has been learned, staff's job is to motivate the learner to use the skill at the right time and in different places as part of the natural routine. Again, how to teach during natural routines will be discussed more in the next session.

Progress Record

Name _____   Skill _____

<div align="center">"+" = independent   "O" = prompted</div>

Task Analysis: Dates:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

14. _____

15. _____

Answers to In-Class Review

1. **The very first thing a DSP must do before attempting to teach anything to anyone is to develop a good relationship with the learner. Describe some of the things DSPs can do to build a good relationship with individuals whom they support.**

   Get to know the things the individual likes and dislikes. Create opportunities to do things with the person that the individual likes to do. Interact often so that you learn each other's communication styles.

2. **What are two important reasons for using a task analysis when teaching a new skill?**

   1) When you use a task analysis to teach a skill, the skill is the same every time it is taught. 2) When you follow a task analysis, the steps of the skills are always taught in the same order. By being consistent and teaching the steps in the same order, complex skills become easier to learn.

3. **Give an example of the following types of prompts:**

   Verbal   Telling a person to pick up the napkin

   Gestural   Pointing to the napkin

   Physical   Guiding the person's hand to pick up the napkin

4. **Describe how you might use a least-to-most assistive prompting strategy to teach an individual to turn on the light when he enters the room (consider turning on the light a one-step task analysis).**

   First tell the person to turn on the light (verbal prompt). If the verbal prompt does not result in the learner turning on the light, then point to the light switch while telling the person to turn on the light (verbal and gestural). If the verbal and gestural prompt do not result in the person turning on the light, then guide the person's hand to switch on the light (physical).

If You Want to Read More About
Teaching Strategies

Curricular and Instructional Approaches for Persons with Severe Handicaps

by Cipani, E., & Spooner, F. , Editors (1994); Boston: Allyn and Bacon; ISBN: 0205140904.

Presents information and techniques instrumental in training teachers in the field of severe disabilities. Includes contributing authors who are recognized experts on the topic. Explains the current technologies and practices that best work in the classroom. Provides an overall reference for teaching practices, including procedures, programs, assessment instruction and research, concerning students with severe disabilities.

Instruction of Students with Severe Disabilities

by Snell, M.E., Editor (1993; 4th ed; New York: Merrill Publishing Co.; ISBN: 0024137510

Featuring ten completely new chapters, and eight chapters extensively revised, the Fourth Edition of this highly-successful book provides a complete portrayal of the status of education as it pertains to students with severe disabilities.

Teaching Students with Severe Disabilities

by Westling, D.L., & Fox, L. (1995); New York: Merrill Publishing Co..; ISBN: 0024265810

This is a straightforward, practical text for future teachers of students with severe disabilities . . . one whose high level of respect for persons with disabilities and their families sets the stage for students to adopt, and maintain, the same high standards. Comprehensive coverage addresses all of the issues pertinent to teaching students with severe disabilities, including both methodology and curricular areas, presenting topics in the chronological order in which a teacher would approach them: Prior considerations, planning and assessment, general instructional procedures, and, finally, procedures specific to teaching learners with certain disabling conditions.

Homework Assignment:
Session #8: Teaching Strategies: Positive Feedback and Teaching at Natural Times

To be ready for your next class session on Teaching Strategies, make sure that you read the *Resource Guide* for Session #8 and complete the homework assignment **before the next class**. You will find it on pages 7 and 12 of your *Resource Guide* for session #8.